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Mexico

**Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and
Standards**

Labeling Procedures for Consumer Products in

Mexico

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Report Highlights:

This report provides guidance on labeling requirements of the official norm NOM-051-SCFI-1994 to companies exporting US food products to Mexico.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Mexico ATO [MX2], MX

NOM-051-SCFI-1994 establishes the information requirements for labels for prepackaged food and non-alcoholic beverages, which are sold directly to consumers in Mexico. The NOM provides consumers with clear and adequate information in order to make informed purchasing decisions. The NOM does not apply to products that are sold in bulk.

Known as NOM-051-SCFI-1994 (General Labeling Specifications for Pre-packaged Foods and Non-Alcoholic Beverages) the standard became effective on July 1, 1997 for all imported and domestically manufactured products. Some products are subject to additional labeling requirements, and in such cases NOM-051 does not supersede those requirements but rather supplements them. For example, table grapes are subject to requirements of NOM-120-SCFI-1966. NOM-051 requirements, which are not included in other product-specific labeling requirements, must be added to the product label. Other products affected by additional labeling requirements include meat and poultry. For information about these specific requirements see page three of this report.

The following summarizes the current minimum regulations for imported products. In general, Mexican labeling rules are as stringent as those in the United States, especially in the area of consumer information. The responsibility to meet the rules falls on the Mexican importer, who advises his US exporter of the specifics for any particular product. Beyond these specific requirements, we urge US exporters to keep in close contact with their importer or distributor to determine what additional information or other stylistic elements would help to sell their products in Mexico.

NOM-051 REQUIREMENTS IN SPANISH

Following are the specific NOM-051 labeling requirements, which are verified at the border and at in-country manufacturing facilities. All label information must be in Spanish, but may also include other languages.

1. Name or type of product and brand. There is no need to translate the brand name.
2. List of ingredients ("lista de ingredientes"): in descending order for those ingredients equal to or exceeding 5 percent of the product composition; including added water; plus the specific percent content of combined additives or colors.
3. Net content ("contenido neto") or drained weight ("masa drenada"), as appropriate, in metric units. In the Mexican metric system, a comma is used in place of a decimal point. Other units of measure may also be shown. Standards detailing the acceptable methods for measurement include: NOM-002-SCFI, Pre-packaged Products-Net Content and Verification Methods; NOM-008-SCFI, General System of Measuring Units, and NOM-030-SCFI, Commercial Information-Declaration of Quantity on Label Specifications. Translations of these NOMS are available at ATO Mexico City, please call, or e-mail for information.
4. Name and address ("nombre y domicilio") of manufacturer. In the case of pre-packaged imported products, the label must bear the name and address of the importer, as well. This information may be added to the pre-packaged product once inside the country, after clearing customs and before sale.

5. Country of origin ("pais de origen"), using language such as "hecho en" (made in) or "producto de" (product of).
6. Batch number. This can be based on the manufacturer's own numbering system and is intended for the purpose of product recall if such becomes necessary.
7. Expiration date ("fecha de caducidad"), as determined by the manufacturer.
8. Nutritional information, required when the label makes any nutritional claim, (product boosts your energy, for example).
9. Optional label information may include: "best consumed by" (date), complementary nutritional information such as vitamins and minerals and instructions for use or preparation.

NOTE: At a minimum, labeling showing product type, brand and net content must appear on the package's primary front surface. All other required or optional labeling information may appear on any other surface of the packaging.

The labeling regulations for general consumer goods require all information on a package to be displayed in Spanish text at least as large and prominent as that of the foreign language label. Stickering is permitted for the first three months of the importation of a new to market food or beverage product. Labels of imported goods have to comply with the NOM's requirements at the point of entry to Mexico.

LABELING FOR PRODUCTS SOLD IN MULTIPLE PACKAGES.

The provisions of NOM-051-SCFI-1994 (batch identification, expiration date and inclusion of the text, "Not Labeled For Individual Sale") do not apply for products marketed in multiple or collective packages or containers if the mass of each of the individual products (without exception) is equal to or less than twenty five grams per unit and the main display area is equal to or less than sixteen square centimeters. A multipack of chewing gum may qualify for this exemption.

In the case of the above mentioned products, the information set forth in the standard, regarding batch identification, expiration date and inclusion of the words, "Not Labeled For Individual Sale", should be shown on the multiple or collective package, if it is not shown on each of the products individually. This exemption is not applicable to fish, dairy or meat products.

LABELING OF MULTIPLE PACKAGES OR CONTAINERS.

According to Official Mexican Standard NOM-051-SCFI-1994, if a wrapping covers the package, such wrapping should contain all the necessary information, unless the label on the package or container can be easily read through the outer wrapping.

This criterion is extended to the situation of multiple and collective packages, in which case the obligatory commercial information may be shown on the multiple or collective package, or on each and every individually prepackaged product. In any event, the multiple packages should display

quantity information (only the quantity of the multiple package, and not that of each of the individually packaged items) according to Official Mexican Standard NOM-030-SCFI-1993 Commercial Information - Statement of Quantity on the Label - Specifications.

The data on expiration date, batch and the words: “Not Labeled for Individual Sale”, should be displayed on each individual item, according to the standard NOM-051-SCFI-1994, aside from the size/weight exception detailed above. If the multiple packages are opened and the products They contain are removed in order to sell them individually to a consumer, such products should individually contain all the obligatory commercial information called for by the standard.

RELATED COMMODITY-SPECIFIC STANDARDS

As referred to in the introduction of this report, following are commodity-specific standards, which have their own labeling requirements. However, this is not intended to be a complete list of all commodity-specific standards.

NOM-053-FITO-1995	Requirements and phytosanitary specifications for publication of information about phytosanitary inputs [pesticides, etc.].
NOM-001-RECNAT-1995	Establishment of the characteristics the markings that wood veneer in rolls should have, such as guidelines for its use and control.
NOM-020-SCFI-1997	Commercial information. Labeling of leathers and natural tanned skins and synthetic or artificial materials with that appearance - shoes, haberdashery, and products manufactured with those materials.
NOM-050-SCFI-1994	Commercial Information- General dispositions for products.
NOM-051-SCFI-1994	General specifications of labeling for prepackaged food and non-alcoholic drinks.
NOM-120-SCFI-1996	Labeling requirements for table grapes.
NOM-128-SCFI-1997	Commercial information: avocado-labeling requirements.
NOM-129-SCFI-1997	Commercial information: Mango labeling requirements.
NOM-046-SSA1-1993	Labeling of pesticides products for household use.
NOM-142-SSA1-1995	Goods and services. Sanitary and commercial specifications for labeling of alcoholic beverages.

VERIFICATION UNITS

The Government of Mexico has currently authorized several private companies to act as official "verification units" for all products labeling subject to NOM-051. Verification units perform the following two services and issue the documents specified below. The latter service is required once the product has reached Mexico.

- a) **Constancia de Conformidad (certificate of compliance).** This process consists of a pre-inspection of the product label or packaging to ensure that it complies with NOM-051 and, when not in compliance, indicates the label's specific faults. The document issued by the verification unit in this case is called a "constancia" and guarantees to the Mexican border inspectors and customs services that the label complies with all NOM-051 requirements. The one-time fee per Constancia is currently about 450 pesos (\$48) plus tax. In addition, a single Constancia can be issued for an entire product "family", regardless of the number of products in the family, as long as the products are of the same type, brand and with identical or very similar labeling. In other words, everything should be the same with the exception of net content. However, for example, a brand line of dry pasta products, regardless of pasta shape, may be considered a family as long as the package and label appearance are the same. For a product family, the Constancia fee is currently the base rate of 450 pesos, plus an additional 50 pesos per product, plus tax.
- b) **Dictamen de Cumplimiento (judgement of compliance).** This procedure is a physical inspection of the product with label attached and applies to: products in storage before entering Mexico; products manufactured and stored in Mexico; and products entering the country in an in-bond status and taken directly to bonded storage facilities. In this case, the verification unit inspects the actual product-with-label to ensure that it complies with the requirements of NOM-051. The fee for a Dictamen is currently about 750 pesos (\$93) plus tax. For a product family the fee is the base rate of 750 pesos, plus 80 pesos per product plus tax.

LIST OF VERIFICATION UNITS

Asociación Nacional de Normalización y Certificación del Sector Electrico, A.C ANCE

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Fax 011-52-55-5395-0700, 5395-7158
www.nice.org.mx

Instituto Mexicano de Normalización y Certificación, A.C. IMNC
Manuel Ma. Contreras 133, Piso 6, Col. San Rafael
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The official source of information on NOM-051-SCFI-1994 and commodity-specific standards is:

Dirección General de Normas

Secretaría de Economía
Puente de Tacamachalco No. 6, Col. Lomas de Tacamachalco
53950, Estado de México
Tel: 011-52-55-5729-9300 exts. 4105/4106
Fax: 011-52-55-5729-9484
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